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Saskatchewan making masks mandatory in Saskatoon, Regina and Prince Albert

By Thomas Piller & David Giles • Global News
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the province is making significant changes to public health

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A gathering size reduction and mandatory masks in indoor public spaces are coming to Saskatchewan's three largest cities to address growing coronavirus rates.

Public health orders will be amended in Prince Albert, Regina and Saskatoon, as of 12:01 a.m. Friday, Nov. 6.

The number of people allowed to gather inside homes in the cities is being reduced from 15 to 10.

All residents in the three cities will be required to wear non-medical masks as of Friday when in indoor public spaces.

This includes all retail businesses, shopping centres and malls, personal services businesses, such as hair and nail salons, spas, body art facilities, and restaurants and bars, except while eating or drinking while seated in designated areas.

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It also applies to all health-care facilities, places of worship, movie theatres

It also applies to all health care facilities, places of worship, movie theatres, sports and recreational facilities and public transportation including cabs, ride share services and carpooling.

Premier Scott Moe said education, not enforcement, is a key goal of the new measure.

“We’re not going to have a bunch of COVID cops that are out (there) travelling across the province and enforcing mask use in our public spaces,” Moe said during a press conference.

“This is about compliance and this is about the onus being on us as individuals to do the right thing and wear a mask in our public spaces in these three centres.”

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Moe said higher mask usage will help curb the spread of COVID-19, but it is only one measure.

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“Mask usage does not replace physical distancing, it’s in addition to physical distancing,” he said.

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“Please don’t let your guard down when it comes to keeping your hands clean, keeping some distance between you and the others that may be in that same facility.”

According to Dr. Saqib Shahab, the province’s chief medical health officer, the measure was not brought in sooner as transmission rates were low.

“Our transmission rates were low and a lot of recreation time was spent outdoors,” Shahab said.

“The reason now (for the mask policy) is that our transmission rates are trending up, so the risk of transmitting is higher now than it has been before.”

The order doesn’t apply to workplaces not accessible to the public, private homes and residences except for service workers and visitors and public indoor areas when eating or drinking while seated or in a designated area.

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It also doesn’t apply to private areas of long-term care homes, personal care homes, group homes, and assisted living, and private resident areas of communal living, hospitality and workplace accommodations.

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The only people exempted from having to wear a non-medical mask are children under the age of two, people actively engaged in physical exercise and anyone who is unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance.

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The public health order will be in place for 28 days and is subject to review by Shahab.

Transmission trends in rural and smaller centres have been linked primarily to private gatherings while transmission in the urban areas includes both private gatherings and exposures in public spaces, the government said Tuesday

Saskatchewan was one shy of tying its single-day record for new coronavirus cases in the province on Tuesday.

Health officials said there were 81 new cases in the daily update, with the overall total for the province growing to 3,[illegible] since the first case was reported in March.

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